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July 5, 2011

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. *J. Fielding ms*
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **NEW ONLINE FOOD PRODUCT RECALL RESOURCE FOR THE PUBLIC**

This is to advise that the Department of Public Health recently launched a recalled food product webpage that provides local consumers and food-related businesses with a quick and easy way to identify recalled food products affecting Los Angeles County (LAC).

The number of food product recalls addressed by the Department's Environmental Health (EH) Division has increased in recent years, which may be due in part to new laws identifying undeclared allergens as a food contaminant. In 2009, EH responded to 431 food product recalls, compared to 87 recalls in 2008, and 78 recalls in 2007. The responsibility for removing recalled food products rests primarily with the food manufacturer and its distributors, who may not supply adequate staff to promptly notify all wholesale and retail outlets. As a result, there is an increased probability of recalled food products remaining in commerce. Although EH conducts field verification checks for product removal, consumers now have the ability to reduce risks associated with consuming contaminated food products if they receive timely information on recalled products.

The Public Health Food Recall Webpage allows users to identify current food product recalls affecting LAC, and provides useful information about the recalled product, including the date of the recall, associated contaminant, risk level, and locations in LAC where the product was distributed. When available, a photo of the product is also posted. Visitors to the site may also click on the associated contaminant to access additional information.

This new online resource will empower consumers to access timely information that can affect their health and that of their families. In addition, this webpage will assist local food-related businesses by consolidating recall information into one easily accessible site, further enhancing rapid removal of potentially harmful products. Industry stakeholders rely heavily on product information communicated by federal and state agencies in order to successfully execute food product recalls.

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The webpage can be found at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/recall/currentRecall.htm>. Additionally, the Department will alert residents to new postings on the webpage through its Facebook and Twitter social media pages. The Department will also reach out to local food wholesalers and retailers to advise them of this newly available resource.

If you have any questions or need additional information about this website, please let me know.

JEF:sk
Ref:PH:1106:003

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors